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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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It’s been an interesting week. The weather has been unusual for this time of year. Temperatures above normal, reaching close to 60 degrees for a couple of days. The worst, however, was one day in which we had wind gusts of over 60 mph. We got home from work and I noticed that the power must have gone out for awhile while we were away. You know, we had the the telltale signs: the VCR was blinking, my alarm clock was flashing, and the monitor attached to my Falcon was displaying a low resolution screen (I’ve been leaving the cup and monitor turned on because both pieces of hardware have been acting up for quite some time now.

Anyway, when I went to re-boot the machine, it wouldn’t work. I’ve known that the external hard drive has been on its last legs for quite some time. The Falcon’s internal hard drive has been dead for a couple of years. If the machine went down, I would have to boot from a pre-made floppy disk so my typical AUTO programs and accessories would load. Well, not this time. I tried numerous times before I gave up.

About three hours later (I still had to work on putting this week’s issue together!). I tried a number of things until finally I decided that either the monitor was bad, or it was the Falcon. I had a spare "bad" Falcon in the closet which I managed to dig out. I say bad because I had swapped it out a couple of years ago because the spacebar and keypad Enter keys no longer worked. You wouldn’t believe how much you rely on those two keys until they no longer work! So, I hooked that machine up, turned it on, and it started to boot - yea! Just as all of the AUTO folder programs loaded, I got two bombs, the busy bee, and that’s as far as the boot process went. I tried numerous times with the same result.

I tried shutting down my external drive that contained a Syquest-44 drive (the only working hard drive still connected), and then booting the machine. I figured that if the cpu booted, I could run the ICD boot program from a floppy (after powering up the Syquest again), running the relog program, and then getting my usual desktop back. That worked, but I no longer had my AUTO programs and desk accessories because I bypassed the normal boot process. Ack, no Warp 9!! So, I’m currently able to run a few of the programs needed to put A-ONE together every week. But, try typing and editing without a spacebar! I have to use the TAB key and backspace within Flash, or set the tabs in WordWriter to individual single spaces! And the lack of speed is killing me! So, I’m managing to get this week’s issue out, but I really have to figure out something quick before I start next week’s issue. It may mean putting aside the Falcons, and digging out an older

machine and setting everything up all over again. I think I still have some old hard drives laying around. As long as I can attach my ICD tape drive to put my programs and data back together, I'll be in business. For now, I have to stop typing because I can't stand doing so without a spacebar!

Until next time...

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AtariMagazines.new: RSS Feed, More Compute!

AtariMagazines.com has added the full text of 16 issues of Compute! magazine:

January 1982, April 1982, May 1983, July 1983, April 1984, May 1984, June 1984, July 1984, August 1984, September 1984, October 1984, November 1984, January 1985, June 1985, December 1985, and December 1989.

In addition, we've added an RSS feed that tracks the latest happenings at the AtariMagazines.com What's New Page:
http://www.atarimagazines.com/new.rss

Enjoy!
Kevin

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone already, and the weather has taken another strange turn. Having disc problems in my neck, I find that I'm much more sensitive to weather changes than I used to be. It's really quite annoying.

But, in the words of one of my favorite artists, "That's not what I came to tell ya about". <grin>

If you're anything like me, you've got interests in a lot of different areas. That's what makes us each unique. One of the things I'm interested in is the space program. You know... rocket ships to the Moon, rovers on Mars, probes to the outer planets... things like that?

Well today NASA finally got the New Horizons mission off the ground. I watched the liftoff via the web. It was nice to see that Atlas-5 take off and reach for the sky.

We are, after all, explorers. Just about every nation on Earth can trace its history back to a point where they were settled by explorers from elsewhere. True, for some countries you have to go back a long way, but the history is there.

New Horizons will look at the farthest-flung "planet" of our solar system, Pluto. I put the word planet in quotes because there is currently some debate as to whether or not we should consider it a planet.

Planet or not, it's out there, it's three billion miles away, it's cold as all get-out, and it's just waiting for us to visit. And what do we get for our 700 million dollars? We get to be explorers again. We get to rediscover the emotional and intellectual joy of learning things that we didn't even know that we didn't know. As is always the case with human beings, we are at our best when we are challenged not by others, but by ourselves.

Well, this mission will surely challenge us. 3 billion miles, almost ten years in transit, speeds never before sustained by a man made object, and the cold... the near absolute cold of deep space are all things that we've never really contended with before.

I, like many others, am somewhat uneasy about the use of radioactive material. I mean, come on, putting 24 pounds of plutonium on top of what is basically a massive controlled explosion to propel it into space is a bit daunting to most of us. Where the hell is all this anti-matter stuff they kept talking about on Star Trek? <g>

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet. Maybe THEY'LL know what happened to all the anti-matter.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Mikael Larsson asks about hard drives for the ST:

"About 15 years ago I had an Atari ST 512 which I upgraded to a the crazy 1024 mb ram.

I remember dreaming about getting a hard disk for it. What different hard disk were there??

If I want to get a new used Atari ST, what different hard disk should I look for?"

'Techie Alison' tells Mikael:

"Exxos and I have some things Atari hard disk related in the pipeline. Time, enthusiasm, and other commitments being the main stumbling block at the moment.

We're aiming for a transparent IDE interface to begin with. The IDE/CF coding is firmware/hardware complete, and the ACSI side is mostly hardware completed, the firmware coding still has to be finished. The SCSI bit comes next but is relatively straightforward. Most of the IDE/SCSI implementation is quite straightforward as once the electrical

side of getting the commands/data back and forth is established, it's literally just a case of getting things in the right places at the right times and converting responses between the differing standards. Data is easy, the responses are a little more involved. The one I'm stuck on at the moment with standard ACSI (not hosted SCSI Uwe) is how the drive size and specs are determined, I'm guessing this is coded into the boot block. Time is the limiting factor as well as moving house atm.

Once we have finally developed the skills here the original project can be expanded upon.

There are things happening out there Mikael but with stumbling blocks and lack of hardware side documentation, as well as lots-of-enthusiastic-brains on the job, it's slow progress.

eBay is definitely the place to watch for the time being though."

Uwe Seimet adds:

"Remember what (I think) I mentioned about determining the size of drives connected to the ACSI bus: The hard disk driver will take care of this, and it is not the concern of the ACSI-related hardware to provide any special functions for this.

All you have to do is implement the ACSI/SCSI command set, anything else will be handled by the hard disk drivers."

Alison replies:

"Yes but there is no ACSI command for determining drive size. Let's assume that we're not going to be using your drivers for a moment, so no SCSI support, just a plain old RLL on the end of the controller running with Atari's bog standard implementation. Bug free or not it can still determine the size of that drive when there is no documented electrical-sequence-of-1's-and-0s to do it.

I can't implement a 3rd party hardware solution if the computer throws something at it and it doesn't respond correctly. With most of these hardware things a lot of it is trial and error as manufacturers will fall back on their drivers at every turn. ie, Implementing a wireless solution with the custom chips out there has to be one of the hardest things to do as the manufacturers insist that you pay exorbitant investment fees to their name, and then the documentation you receive is non-existent, read the sci.electronics groups. The corporate market is not open and is highly protective of it's internal interfacing and source code. If I was a gigantic manufacturer I'd have paid Atari ,000 for detailed hardware documentation and would have finished this 3 months ago.

It's a bit like putting a teenage driver in a car with no wheels on it.

I'm at the point now where I just couldn't care less after banging my head against a wall, hence, no interface. If it's that simple then I'd be grateful if someone else would do it and I'll pay them for a little retail box which requires no soldering, programming of GAL chips and fiddling about. Just something which plugs into that ACSI port and gives me mass storage without third party drivers and specialist hacks.

I have no enthusiasm to do this anymore when all that ends up is argument without facts.

To add to this, <calms down>, if the Atari drivers issue a command of '1' for example, then I have to tell my interface what to do. It's more that for each of the ACSI/SCSI commands I have to 'interface' these to whatever mass storage device is on the other end. So I need to know EXACTLY what data and commands are going back and forth, and I have to entirely understand those commands explicitly. If I can't calculate every possible eventuality or possible blip then the interface will be unreliable with some byte at some point amongst billions of transferred bytes. This is not acceptable."

Mikael Larsson asks about connection different monitors to his ST:

"I have been looking for a ATARI ST/E to buy and they almost always sells with a monitor. But monitors are heavy and therefore the shipping is expensive, now I wonder can you connect a PC monitor to the ATARI and still get high resolution?"

Greg Goodwin tells Mikael:

"Here's some instructions from a well known Atarian (lightly edited) on how to make a cable. It is also possible to purchase these from several sources as has been previously noted.

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Atari ST to VGA adapter

Claes Holmerup
17 Aug 1998

You can use an SVGA monitor with an adapter cable (which is rather easy

to assemble) to get a monochrome picture. Some old VGA monitors may work, but all SVGA should work as far as I know.

Here's how you make your adapter:

Atari (13-pin DIN)	SVGA (15-pin HD D-type)
11 (Monochrome output)	1,2,3 (Red, Green, Blue inputs)**
12 (Vertical sync)	14 (Vertical sync)
9 (Horizontal sync)	13 (Horizontal sync)
13 (Ground)	4,5,6,7,8,10,11 (Various grounds)
4 (Monochrome detect)	short to ground (pin 13 on ST)

The trick here is that the monochrome signal is fed to all the inputs on the SVGA-monitor, which gives you a very nice monochrome picture. Even though the monitor in fact is a color monitor, you won't be able to see a color picture because of the construction of the computer (and the monitor). If you get your hands on a monitor which handles frequencies down to 15kHz, it's a whole new deal - then you should be able to build yourself a cable with a switch between mono and color (a little more complicated, involving a 4-way switch, but possible all the same). Just

about no modern monitors go lower than 30kHz, so in most cases there is no other choice than mono - but since most useful programs (IMHO) run in monochrome, it’s the best alternative anyway...

Good luck!
Claes

**Editor’s Note: The ST output is a bit higher than the 0.7V expected by the VGA monitor, so some sets of instructions call for an inline 4K7 resistor. If your monitor can handle 1V input (most modern ones can), the resistor is not needed."

David Wade adds:

"As others have said yes, you can get hi-res fairly easily.. However if you want to play games then a CRT based PC monitor is no good on its own. What you really need is something that runs TV type Video, preferably via RGB.

You can then get (or make) an Atari Video to "scart" lead. I use an Phillips CM8833, but there are several other monitors available. I guess something like this

http://www.microdirect.co.uk/ProductInfo.aspx?ProductID=9359&GroupID=420

not sure to watch the response ....

Other options are are an external TV RGB to VGA converter, but these seem both rare and expensive.You can also use a video capture device to route the video through a PC. Whilst these work, you don’t always get a good picture...."

Stephen Moss adds his thoughts:

"Yes you can, you will need an ST-VGA adaptor and you will only be able to use High resolution.
Several Atari outlets stock them, the first one that comes to mind is Atari Workshop http://www.atari-workshop.co.uk or check with you usual Atari supplier."

Edward Baiz adds:

"Yes, it is possible to connect an Atari ST(e) to a PC VGA monitor. For use in color, I use an old piece of Atari hardware called Video Key. It connects to the ST and has a composite-video out port on it. I just connect that to a video converter and from there to a PC monitor. It works fine for low and med res, but for high res there is a simple adaptor that plugs right into the ST that goes directly to the PC monitor. That works great also."

Well folks, that’s it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Lord of the Rings' To Expand!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Playstation "Twitch"!?
Ape Escape Academy!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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'Rings' World Expands With 'Battle II' Game

Electronic Arts is expanding its "Lord of the Rings" video game franchise beyond the scope of Peter Jackson's Oscar-winning trilogy.

The company said Friday that "The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II," a sequel to the best-selling PC game, will become available for Xbox 360 in the summer.

"Battle II" is the first game to blend the literary source material with the actors, music and sets from Jackson's films. This was made possible by licensing deal last year that gave EA the literary rights to J.R.R. Tolkien's original books through an agreement with rights holder Saul Zaentz.

The real-time strategy game was developed at EALA, EA's Los Angeles studio. Hugo Weaving reprised his role as Elrond, the Elven leader, from the New Line Cinema films. Weaving also serves as narrator of the game, and his likeness is featured.

The title will allow multiplayer gaming through Microsoft's Xbox Live online subscription service. It is the first "Rings" game for Xbox 360, though its development was built using the PC version as a starting point instead of being created specifically for the new console from the ground up.

Additional games also are in the works based on the literary and film "Rings," including additional next-generation titles. Sources close to the project said that a new role-playing game is in development at EA with the working title of "The Lord of the Rings: The White Council."

EA picked up the movie rights to "Rings" late in the property's life and had to combine sequences from "The Fellowship of the Ring" and "The Two Towers" into one game with its first release. But the publisher has been able to explore all of the films more thoroughly since then and continues to find new game genres. Next-generation graphics open up a new opportunity for these games because they will offer a more vivid depiction of the film

universe.

Doctor Diagnoses ’Playstation Twitch’

A 9-year-old boy in California who suffered from uncontrollable head jerking movements after long hours of video game playing stopped the twitching after his doctor banned him from playing his Playstation. Nicholas Lavin said that he played PlayStation constantly over the holidays at his home in San Diego and began to notice that his head would jerk back and forth.

"I would do funny things with my head," Nicholas said.

Lavin’s mother said her son began to twitch so badly that she took him to the family’s pediatrician.

The doctor told her he was not allowed to play PlayStation anymore. Once he stopped playing PlayStation, the twitching stopped, according to the report.

"All the head jerking is gone and his eyes are completely back to normal," Barbara Lavin said. "I think it’s a direct connection to the PlayStation and the amount of time he spent on it."

The San Diego Epilepsy Foundation said some video stimulation at certain frequencies can cause epileptic-type seizures or body jerks.

Doctors said to set time limits for games, keep lights on in the room so it’s bright, and make sure children stay at least two feet way from the screen.

Ape Escape Academy For PSP and Ape Escape 3 For Playstation 2 Ships

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. today announced the release of Ape Escape 3 designed exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Ape Escape Academy for the PSP (PlayStationPortable) system. Created by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc., these new additions expand the well-known Ape Escape franchise first made popular on the PlayStation game console. With a mischievous tone and colorful style, Ape Escape 3 marks the return of the troublesome pipo monkeys that are on the loose and intent on world domination. Complete with a hilarious plot, enhanced monkey AI, a new transformation feature, inventive mini-games and clever pop culture parodies, Ape Escape 3 will impress fans old and new of the franchise. As one of the first party games for the PSP system, Ape Escape Academy is an ideal pick-up-and-play game with a varied collection of more than 40 original mini-games including hockey, dodgeball, karate, rhythm dancing and more.

"The latest installments to the Ape Escape franchise are sure to deliver to fans exactly what they want -- fresh storylines, enhanced features, and unique gameplay," said John Koller, senior product manager, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "Retaining all of the humor and fun of the previous games, Ape Escape 3 and Ape Escape Academy give players the sheer creativity and endless gameplay variety certain to make these madcap

monkeys a favorite for gamers of all ages."

Pop culture parodies accent every aspect of the game as Ape Escape 3 features the returning evil villain Specter who has enlisted his army of monkeys to take over the world by creating mind-numbing television programs that turn viewers into couch potatoes. Two new heroes, Kei and his sister Yumi, are determined to takedown over 400 monkeys on television sets just as their outrageous shows are about to air. Players can choose to take on the role of either sibling, and for the first time have the ability to transform into seven imaginative characters each with different skill sets. Character transformations include the Miracle Ninja, Wild West Kid, Fantasy Knight, Genie Dancer and more. In addition, through collaboration with SCEI and KONAMI, Ape Escape 3 takes parody to a new level with an extensive unlockable mini-game modeled after the Metal Gear Solid franchise. Players also can test their movie-making skills in the "Simian Cinema" which will give them the opportunity to cast and create their own 15-second short with captured monkeys as their star actors. Family-friendly and perfect for gamers on-the-go, Ape Escape Academy for the PSP system also extends the humorous tone of the title with a wide variety of wacky mini-games filled with frantic fun that enables players to create apes ready and willing to take over the world. Players will have the opportunity to challenge themselves in one of the three mini-game areas: Mind, Body and Technique. Gamers will aim to achieve head of the class status in the Academy mode, the primary mode, where players progress within the school system as they win various mini-games. After a player attempts a mini-game within the Academy mode, it will be entered into the Game Collection where it can be replayed for practice or to achieve a higher score.

Ape Escape Academy also features ad-hoc wireless connectivity allowing two players to battle in head-to-head competitions on their PSP systems. A number of the mini-games also are available in the innovative Share mode where two players can take on one another simultaneously using one PSP system.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

New Technology Boosts Hard Drive Capacity

Seagate Technology LLC has started shipping a notebook PC hard drive that overcomes an obstacle many feared would be a major roadblock to the further expansion of disk capacity - and the overall growth of the storage industry.

The new approach that aligns bits of data vertically rather than horizontally enables Seagate - and other drive vendors - to further boost the density of drives without increasing the risk of scrambling data.

Since the first hard drive was introduced 1956, bits have been arranged in a flat, horizontal fashion on the spinning platters. To boost capacity,

engineers reduced the size of the particles whose magnetic state is what actually remembers data.

But with some drives now topping out at 500 gigabytes, the miniaturization is nearly at its limit. Made any smaller, the particles can begin to interfere with the magnetism of their neighbors. The result is disastrous for data.

By storing bits in a vertical, or perpendicular, arrangement, engineers are able to boost capacity by taking advantage of the real estate that is freed up.

It’s a major change that all drive makers are in the process of undertaking, said John Donovan, vice president at the research firm TrendFocus.

"It a whole new way of doing things," he said. "Not only do you have to change the thinking, but the tooling, the way the heads and disks interact with each other."

Seagate’s new drive, the Momentus 5400.3, was being shipped as of Monday, the Scotts Valley, Calif.-based company said. The shift to perpendicular recording allows it to bump up the maximum capacity of its notebook drive to 160 gigabytes from 120 gigabytes.

The 2.5-inch drive costs $325, compared to about $240 for the 120 gig model. Seagate plans to extend the new recording technology to other notebook drives, as well its 1-inch drives used in handheld gadgets and 3.5-inch drives for desktop PCs.

"Our transition to perpendicular technology increases our ability to meet the needs of our growing customer base," said Karl Chicca, general manager of Seagate’s Personal Storage unit.

Other drive makers also have either announced products or plans that include perpendicular recording. At the Consumer Electronics Show earlier this month, Toshiba unveiled its second 1.8-inch drive that relies on the new technology.

Perpendicular recording has benefits beyond boosting storage density by reducing the need for additional components, said Mike Hall, a Seagate spokesman.

"If you can reduce the component count, you reduce the power drawn, you reduce the heat and you reduce the wear and tear," he said.

In the next three to five years, the new technology is expected to increase maximum drive capacities five fold, Hall said.

Corel Debuts Revamped WordPerfect Office Software

Corel Corp. launched a new version of its budget WordPerfect Office software package on Tuesday, with the Canadian software maker saying it is a cheaper alternative to Microsoft Corp.’s Office software.

Ottawa-based Corel said its new WordPerfect Office X3 includes the ability to import and export documents, spreadsheets and presentations to the

Portable Document Files (PDF) format, as well as revamped e-mail features.

Privately held Corel's WordPerfect is one of a few programs that compete against Microsoft in the Office application-suite market for PCs running the software giant's Windows operating system. Sun Microsystems Inc. offers a product called StarOffice.

Corel said its WordPerfect Office X3 costs between $79 and $399. Microsoft, the world's largest software maker, offers its Office programs from around $150 to more than $500.

Microsoft held a $135 million investment in Corel, which it sold in 2003 at a deep loss, before the Canadian company was bought by venture capital firm Vector Capital Corp.

GPL 3 Released for Public Comment

The Free Software Foundation (FSF) released the first public draft of the new version of the General Public License, marking the first major alterations in 15 years to the licensing guidelines used by the open-source community.

The GPL was originally intended for free software developed by the FSF, but the I.T. industry has experienced a sea change since then. Currently, there are some 50,000 developers using the GPL as a way of getting their software out to users.

According to the FSF, the GNU GPL is the most widely used free-software license worldwide, with almost three-quarters of all free software programs, including Linux, distributed under it.

Use of software released under the GPL allows distributors to charge for distributing the software - for example, for the cost of putting it on a CD-ROM - but it prohibits charging for actual software usage.

The new GPL 3 draft provides an explicit patent license that covers any patents held by the program's developers, replacing the implicit license on which GPL 2 relies.

Other provisions require some distributors to protect software users against patent-infringement claims, and prevent GPL-licensed applications from being used in digital-rights management (DRM) software.

"As a campaign to limit users' rights, the adoption of DRM is fundamentally at odds with the spirit of the free software movement," the document states. "Our aim is, and must be, the abolition of DRM as a social practice."

"The language in this version appeals more to organizations than individual users, especially concerning patents," said Aberdeen analyst Stacey Quandt. "There is more reference to suing companies that don't respect the license."

Quandt also noted that the definition of derivative works - or modified versions of applications - remains nebulous in the GPL 3 draft. "I think it's intentionally vague because a lot depends on where the program is implemented."

The GNU GPL license is the most widely used vehicle for acquiring open-source software, said Forrester Research vice president Julie Giera, adding that Forrester's latest research indicates that more than 60 percent of companies have installed, or plan to install, some open-source software.

Giera pointed out that the FSF is engaging in a difficult balancing act with the revision, trying to find ways to minimize the burdens and risks that I.T. managers face using open-source code while at the same time keeping the spirit of open-source software alive.

IDC analyst Dan Kusnetzky described the GPL upgrade as an evolutionary change rather than a major overhaul. "Open-source software is used in many countries today, and is subject to several different legal structures," he said. "So the FSF is attempting to ensure that freely available software is still protected everywhere it is used."

The GPL 3 draft is available for download from the FSF Web site. It was released at this week's International Public Conference for GPL 3 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The FSF is seeking feedback from software developers and users, and plans to publish a final discussion document by this fall. The final license is expected by spring 2007.

Internet Explorer 7 Will Flush Its History

Microsoft's forthcoming Internet Explorer (IE) 7 browser will have a thorough flush feature that clears its history and all associated files stored after a Web site is accessed.

In IE 6, a user has to spend lots of time trying to expunge the information stored after a Web site has been visited, wrote Uche Enuha, a program manager on the IE user experience team, on the company's browser blog.

The new "delete browsing history" feature under the "tools" menu will be able to wipe out five major data categories, including temporary Internet files, cookies, history, form data, and passwords, Enuha wrote.

A user can delete all of those at once or can individually choose which ones to wipe through the "delete browsing history" panel, Enuha wrote.

The feature goes deeper than a novice user would likely pursue. For example, deleting files from the temporary Internet files folder will also clean out attachments stored by the Outlook e-mail program in that folder, Enuha wrote.

A beta version of IE 7 has been out for Windows XP Service Pack 2 and an enhanced beta version is available for the beta 1 version of Windows Vista, according to Microsoft's Web site.

Maine Touts Recycling Computer Monitors

A first-in-the-nation law went into effect Wednesday in Maine, requiring makers of televisions and computer monitors to pick up the tab to recycle and safely dispose of their products once they are discarded.

Under the law, which mirrors the approach taken in Europe and Japan, manufacturers must shoulder the cost of sending electronics to recycling centers where toxic materials such as lead and mercury are removed.

"It’s time to bring them out of the attics, out of the garages, out of the closets, out of the basements," said Jon Hinck of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, which lobbied for the new law.

The Maine recycling law is the first to bill manufacturers directly for the cost, Hinck said. A California law requires customers to pay a disposal fee when they buy a TV or computer monitor, while Maryland imposes registration fees on computer makers and disburses the proceeds to municipalities for use in recycling old hardware.

Up until now, Maine communities charged people $15 to $20 to dispose of their electronic gear. Under the new law, consumers can drop off their TVs and computer screens for $2 apiece.

Maine has approved five consolidators that will gather and sort the "e-waste," send it to recyclers and bill manufacturers for the cost according to the amount of waste they originated, said David Littell, acting commissioner of environmental protection.

Disposal costs for "orphan units" whose manufacturers are no longer in business will be shared by the other companies in proportion to their overall costs.

TVs and older computer monitors each contain between four and eight pounds of lead, along with an array of other toxic materials, and newer flat-screen monitors contain mercury, according to the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

The primary purpose of the law is to keep those materials from being released into the environment from incinerators or landfills. But it is also intended to encourage manufacturers to use less lead and design products that lend themselves to recycling.

Cities and states across the country are considering electronic waste legislation designed to address what the Environmental Protection Agency has called the nation’s fastest-growing category of solid waste.

The Electronic Industries Alliance, a trade group representing manufacturers of computers and televisions, expressed concern about the Maine law, suggesting that the state may have difficulty holding some foreign and small generic manufacturers to the same standards imposed on makers of brand-name equipment.

"We clearly want to see this addressed at a national level. We think that’s one way to avoid some of those loopholes," said Rick Goss, the association’s director of environmental affairs in Arlington, Va.

EBay Plans Instant-buying Service on Yahoo!

EBay Inc. on Wednesday said it had unveiled a new instant-purchase service to supplement its bid-and-wait online auctions, pitting the company directly against conventional e-commerce retailers.

Bill Cobb, president of eBay North America, said in a memo to eBay users on Wednesday that the new service - to be called eBay Express when launched this spring - aims to broaden the range of products shoppers can expect to buy on eBay.

eBay also disclosed changes to the fees it charges in the United States for listing items on eBay.com, raising by around 8 percent the percentage transaction fee that it charges on the value of goods between $25 and $975 in value. It said it would cut prices on low-priced items and other seller features.

"We do believe this broadly to be accretive," EBay Chief Financial Officer Rajiv Dutta told investors on a conference call with investors following the company’s 2005 year-end financial report.

eBay spokesman Hani Durzy said that eBay now charges 5.25 percent of the first $25 of the final sale price of an item; 2.75 percent of the next incremental $975 of value, and 1.5 percent of the incremental value above $1000 of the item. The middle tier of prices - from $25 to $975 - will now be charged transaction fees of 3 percent, up from 2.75 percent.

EBay Express will feature an online shopping cart that allows buyers to select multiple items and pay for them all at once, as Amazon.com Inc. shoppers are used to doing.

Payments can be made via credit cards or eBay’s online payment service. Sellers are paid instantly, meaning the potential for buyers to defraud sellers is eliminated.

"We also think it (eBay Express) will attract new buyers to eBay who prefer a more conventional e-commerce shopping experience," Cobb said in his note to users in the San Jose, California, company’s core North American market.

The full note is available on eBay’s site at:
http://www2.ebay.com/aw/core/200601181327302.html/

EBay Express is described as a "specialty site" that will be part of the broader eBay marketplace, alongside its exiting eBay Stores and "Fixed Price" listings.

EBay sellers with strong buyer ratings will qualify to sell their items on both eBay Express and traditional eBay.com sites. Initially, eBay Express will only be available to U.S. sellers, but plans are to extend the service internationally.

EBay Express is "a new feature, a quick and easy way to find items at a fixed price for quick and easy shopping," eBay President and Chief Executive Meg Whitman told investors on a conference call following the company’s 2005 year-end financial report.

EBay price increases initially apply only to U.S. listings. International price changes will be announced later this quarter, eBay executives said. EBay also said it was waiving all final sale fees in its EachNet China business.

Suspect in Federal Spam Case Pleads Guilty

The main defendant in the nation's first prosecution under a 2004 federal anti-spam law pleaded guilty Tuesday to three felony charges, federal prosecutors said.

Daniel J. Lin, 30, of West Bloomfield Township faces nearly five years in prison and a fine of up to $250,000, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Detroit said.

Two of the counts are fraud charges involving millions of unsolicited spam e-mails sent to computer users. The other is possession of a firearm by a felon, for guns discovered when authorities raided Lin's suburban Detroit home.

He is scheduled to be sentenced May 16 in U.S. District Court in Ann Arbor.

Lin and three other West Bloomfield Township men were identified in court documents as being part of the massive illegal spam scheme.

Court papers described a complex web of corporate identities, bank accounts and electronic storefronts used to send hundreds of thousands of e-mail sales pitches for fraudulent weight-loss and erectile dysfunction products.

The Federal Trade Commission said angry consumers forwarded to authorities more than 490,000 e-mails from the operation from January 2004 to April 2004 - more than from any other spam outfit worldwide during the same period.

Court records show that charges against the other defendants, James J. Lin, Chris Chung and Mark M. Sadek, have been dismissed. The four were arrested in April 2004.

Google, U.S. Clash Over Online Searches

Google Inc. is rebuffing the Bush administration's demand for a peek at what millions of people have been looking up on the Internet's leading search engine - a request that underscores the potential for online databases to become tools of the government.

Mountain View-based Google has refused to comply with a White House subpoena first issued last summer, prompting U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales this week to ask a federal judge in San Jose for an order to force a handover of the requested records.

The government wants a list all requests entered into Google's search engine during an unspecified single week - a breakdown that could conceivably span tens of millions of queries. In addition, it seeks 1 million randomly selected Web addresses from various Google databases.

In court papers that the San Jose Mercury News reported on after seeing them Wednesday, the Bush administration depicts the information as vital in its effort to restore online child protection laws that have been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Google competitor Yahoo Inc., which runs the Internet's second-most used search engine, confirmed Thursday that it had complied with a similar government subpoena.

Although the government says it isn’t seeking any data that ties personal information to search requests, the subpoena still raises serious privacy concerns, experts said, especially considering recent revelations that the White House authorized eavesdropping on domestic civilian communications after the Sept. 11 attacks without obtaining court approval.

"Search engines now play such an important part in our daily lives that many people probably contact Google more often than they do their own mother," said Thomas Burke, a San Francisco attorney who has handled several prominent cases involving privacy issues.

"Just as most people would be upset if the government wanted to know how much you called your mother and what you talked about, they should be upset about this, too."

The content of search request sometimes contain information about the person making the query.

For instance, it’s not unusual for search requests to include names, medical information or Social Security information, said Pam Dixon, executive director for the World Privacy Forum.

"This is exactly the kind of thing we have been worrying about with search engine for some time," Dixon said. "Google should be commended for fighting this."

Other search engines already have complied with similar subpoenas issued by the Bush administration, according to court documents. The cooperating search engines weren’t identified.

Yahoo stressed that it didn’t reveal any personal information. "We are rigorous defenders of our users’ privacy," Yahoo spokeswoman Mary Osako said Thursday. "In our opinion, this is not a privacy issue."

Microsoft Corp. MSN, the No. 3 search engine, declined to say whether it even received a similar subpoena. "MSN works closely with law enforcement officials worldwide to assist them when requested," the company said in a statement.

As the Internet’s dominant search engine, Google has built up a valuable storehouse of information that "makes it a very attractive target for law enforcement," said Chris Hoofnagle, senior counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

The Department of Justice argues that Google’s cooperation is essential in its effort to simulate how people navigate the Web.

In a separate case in Pennsylvania, the Bush administration is trying to prove that Internet filters don’t do an adequate job of preventing children from accessing online pornography and other objectionable destinations.

Obtaining the subpoenaed information from Google "would assist the government in its efforts to understand the behavior of current Web users, (and) to estimate how often Web users encounter harmful-to-minors material in the course of their searches," the Justice Department wrote in a brief filed Wednesday

Google - whose motto when it went public in 2004 was "do no evil" - contends that submitting to the subpoena would represent a betrayal to its users, even if all personal information is stripped from the search terms

sought by the government.

"Google’s acceding to the request would suggest that it is willing to reveal information about those who use its services. This is not a perception that Google can accept," company attorney Ashok Ramani wrote in a letter included in the government’s filing.

Complying with the subpoena also wound threaten to expose some of Google’s "crown-jewel trade secrets," Ramani wrote. Google is particularly concerned that the information could be used to deduce the size of its index and how many computers it uses to crunch the requests.

"This information would be highly valuable to competitors or miscreants seeking to harm Google’s business," Ramani wrote.

Dixon is hoping Google’s battle with the government reminds people to be careful how they interact with search engines.

"When you are looking at that blank search box, you should remember that what you fill can come back to haunt you unless you take precautions," she said.

Phishing Attacks Hit All-Time High

The Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG) is saying that phishing attacks are more rampant now than ever, especially after last year, which saw steady growth of the online fraud.

The number of unique fraud attacks launched over e-mail in November 2005 was nearly double that of November 2004, according to the industry group.

Although phishers continue to stick to some tried-and-true tactics - such as using the names of financial institutions to trick people into giving up their account information - they also have started using the names of other brands, like eBay, Google, and Apple.

The number of major brand names targeted increased from 64 to 93 over the course of the past year, the APWG claims. Also increased is the number of Trojans used by phishers, particularly those pieces of malicious software that are carrying keylogger programs.

The continued rise in phishing attacks shows increasing sophistication in strategy as well as more organized efforts among online criminals, said Dave Jevans, APWG chairman.

"We’re a long way from the days when attacks on systems were done to show off," he said. "With the motivation today being money, that creates a different kind of attacker."

Often, he said, phishers are highly organized and very technologically savvy in using remote-controlled zombie machines to launch their attacks.

As Internet users become more aware of potential scams involving financial institutions, phishers have been broadening their tactics to include messages purporting to be from well-trusted companies like Apple.

"Basically, if they think it’ll work, they’ll try it," said Jevans. "So

many companies send e-mails out to users with information about their account settings, and phishers see that as an opportunity to cash in."

The APWG is keen on educating users to help reduce the phishing threat. And, as users become slowly more aware of the problem and take protective measures, other organizations have launched some technological efforts to tackle the phishing problem.

For example, the recently released Thunderbird e-mail client, version 1.5, has a built-in phishing detector to flag suspicious e-mail messages.

Other e-mail applications and Web browsers have begun to implement phishing protection as well, and the industry as a whole has been calling for stronger forms of e-mail authentication.

Hackers Attack U.K. Student’s Web Site on Yahoo!

A Web site that earned an enterprising British student $1 million suffered a crippling attack by ransom-seeking hackers.

Alex Tew, 21, said Wednesday that his Million Dollar Homepage was targeted after he publicized how it had helped him raise money for his university studies.

Tew had sold 10,000 small squares of advertising space on the Web site for $100 each, achieving his target in four months. His initiative spawned several copycat sites.

But Tew said that on Jan. 7, he received a threat from an organization calling itself "The Dark Group," demanding that he pay them $50,000 within 72 hours or face having his site taken down.

"It was written in poor English, but the hackers asked for $50,000, saying that it was just 5 percent of what I had made," Tew said. "I did not reply to the e-mail. I had no intention of paying."

Tew ignored the threat. Hackers then initiated a so-called distributed denial of service, in which attackers take command of third-party computers, through a virus or other security vulnerability, and instruct them to send junk data to the target site, overwhelming servers and causing the site to crash or perform poorly.

Tew said the site now works normally.

Tew, from Wiltshire, a county in southern England, said he informed the FBI because his site is hosted in the United States.

FBI spokesman Paul Bresson said the agency was investigating.

Such extortion cases targeting Web sites are occurring with greater frequency.

Rating System Urged for Adult Internet Content

An influential U.S. Senator warned the adult entertainment industry on Thursday that if it does not develop a rating system for its Internet content, Congress will.

"My advice to your clients is that you better do it soon or we will mandate it if you don't," Republican Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska, chairman of the Commerce Committee, told Paul Cambria, general counsel to the Adult Freedom Foundation.

Cambria told the committee hearing that it was the first time his group had been invited to testify before Congress on the issue and he would take the message back to his clients.

"I take that as a message and mandate to my clients that we should do that," Cambria said. "I might welcome a shot across the bow rather than one between the eyes."

Tim Lordan, executive director of the Internet Education Foundation, said about 75 percent of Internet pornography comes from overseas, beyond the reach of U.S. laws. He said parents play a crucial role in keeping unwanted material away from their children and that a rating system would help.

James Burrus of the FBI, illustrating how pervasive the problem is, said that a word search on "pornography" produced 19 million results.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General Laura Parsky said law enforcement is using increasingly sophisticated techniques, including following the path of financial transactions, to crack down on child pornography. Younger children are being abused and the images are becoming more disturbing, she said.

"In the past several years, the children we have seen in these images have been younger and younger, and, very regrettably, the abuse depicted has been increasingly more severe and is often sadistic," she said.

She declined to comment on a Justice Department subpoena of Google Inc., saying she could not talk about ongoing investigations. The department is seeking documents as part of the agency's probe of Internet pornography and the company rejected the demand as overreaching by the government.

Russian Tycoon Is Spammers' New Target

Russia has more in common with Nigeria these days than just oil.

Following up on the politically charged jailing of oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a wave of scam e-mails in the style of Nigeria's notorious spammers have been popping up in inboxes from Moscow to Kentucky.

But instead of impassioned pleas by dead African dictators' aides to move millions of dollars overseas, the appeals appear to come from the inner circle of the man who was once Russia's richest.

"Dear friend, I got your reliable contact from my husband's business diary ..." begins one letter from "Leila Khodorkovsky," claiming to be the billionaire's wife - whose actual name is Inna. The letter requests assistance investing US$45 million (euro37 million) of the tycoon's money

and promises compensation.

Another is signed by "Larissa Sosnitskaya," who describes herself as a personal treasurer to Khodorkovsky, seeking a beneficiary for a similar sum that she intends to use "to relocate to the American continent and never to be connected to any of Mikhail Khodorkovsky conglomerates."

While their details - and often grammar - are muddled, the Khodorkovsky-themed spam highlights the notoriety of his case and his eight-year sentence on tax and fraud charges, which critics called Kremlin revenge for his sponsoring of opposition parties.

Worth some US$15 billion before his arrest at gunpoint on a Siberian airfield in 2003 - and currently an inmate of a bleak prison colony on Russia's border with China - Khodorkovsky was an obvious choice for the authors of the Nigerian-style spam, experts say.

"This is a well-developed business - they choose what is up-to-date," said Yevgeny Altovsky, who coordinates a UNESCO-backed anti-spamming program in Moscow.

"The main thing is it has to involve some kind of rich person," he said. "If a major court case against Bill Gates were to start tomorrow I'm sure he would appear in these messages."

Yukos spokeswoman Claire Davidson declined to comment on why spammers might have selected Khodorkovsky and the company he founded as subject matter.

"They aren't being issued from within the company," she said, referring to one letter in circulation allegedly signed by Bruce Misamore, Yukos' former chief financial officer.

While versions of the letter from Khodorkovsky's managers have been sent in Russian, Altovsky said Russian Internet users are wise to such scams and were unlikely to be fooled.

Indeed, the Russian market for spam differs widely from the more aggressive U.S. fare of online casinos, porn sites and erectile dysfunction drugs, and is used primarily by small and medium businesses as a means to advertise. Nonetheless, the Russian practice causes some $30 million a year in damages from traffic costs, Altovsky said.

Nigeria - globally recognized as a base for criminals exploiting the reach of the Internet - said in October that it is considering making spamming a criminal offense that could land senders of unsolicited e-mails in jail for three years.

Africa's most populous country is known for its "advance fee" scammers - criminals scouting for victims by sending millions of unsolicited e-mails with false proposals around the world.

Among the most common are e-mails proposing to share portions of dead African dictators' ill-gotten estates in exchange for an advance payment to help move the money overseas. The scammers keep the "fees" while victims receive nothing.

Khodorkovsky's case was accompanied by a sweeping back tax investigation at his Yukos oil company that eventually saw its main production unit sold in a disputed auction and eventually ending up in state hands. Yukos managers have since fled Russia as their colleagues were jailed and arrested in the

continuing probe.

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